

Don't Sulk Through Your Waiting Season

Met with one of my brothers the other morning and we had a good time checking in on one another. This guy is a talented young preacher. Maybe even freakishly gifted. And he's hungry to show what he can do.

As well as he should be. In fact, he has all the intangibles that make you excited about his future. Yet he knows and I know as well that for this season of his life concerning preaching and/or pastoral ministry, God's got him in a neutral gear. In other words, God wants him to be ready to drive, but his time to drive hasn't come yet. What I was so proud of though was that he totally understood that the Lord has him in neutral for good reasons and he wants to honor God during this season of waiting his turn.

I've been there. Who am I kidding? I'm there now! Truth is, ALL of us will have areas in our lives and our ministries where God hasn't released us to "do all we could do," but simply keep those engines in neutral and be ready.

Sure, we "think" we could run at full speed. And perhaps that's true. But there are some lessons that we just CAN'T learn while in the saddle. We learn them when we're backstage, in the background, in obscurity. Lessons like patience and character aren't microwaved. They're baked.

So the important thing is to treasure the season you're in, because it's a God-willed season. God is just as big backstage as He is onstage. Never forget that. Secondly, learn all you can. While you're backstage that's the time to learn those things that are caught and not taught.

This isn't new to us, of course. The Bible is full of examples of faithful number twos that we can learn from. Joshua is

nothing without 40 years at Moses's side doing what he was told and faithfully waiting on his turn. Elishah performed twice as many miracles as his predecessor Elijah. but not before faithfully serving in the background.

Timothy was a timid leader before and during his encounters with his mentor Paul. But because he was a faithful follower, he finished well with a bold and courageous ministry. Here are things to remember and some applications to consider during the process of waiting our turn.

1. Every leader worth his salt spent time backstage. Any leader who's worth following can speak at length about what it was like for their season of waiting. Moses spent 40 years in Midian tending sheep with no one knowing or caring who he was. God waited until his 40th year of total obscurity before he entrusted him with the deliverance of a nation. Joshua spent 40 years at Moses' side being No. 2. David was anointed King and went right back to tending sheep. A while later he slew a giant and went right back to tending sheep until he was called into Saul's court. And so forth. Every leader God called he usually called to a lesser role first. You know the leaders who don't honor this time. They're usually overly frustrated, egotistical, and terribly insecure ... and usually ... unsuccessful.

2. Nobody Wants A Leader That Doesn't Honor This Season. Think about it. Do you want to follow someone that hadn't learned to follow? Do you want to sit under leadership that hasn't been tested this way? Didn't think so. Others don't want that, either.

3. While You're Waiting Serve Like Crazy. Watch Joshua and Elishah and David. These guys understood that a backstage position is not an off position. Understand that God has a plan for your life tomorrow. But he sure has a plan for you today as well. Some of you reading this are in such obscure positions that you're sure no one sees your service. Maybe

that's the point. Perhaps God wants you to learn how to exude faithfulness when the only one that cares is the only one who's always watching: God. This isn't rocket science. Get on a setup team or some other avenue of service in your church or neighborhood. Ask where the most help is needed. Do the little things. One more thing ... when you do get "there" ... don't forget how you got there. The people need to see a leader who doesn't mind doing the little things from time to time.

4. While You're Waiting, Study the Leaders. I laugh when I think of Joshua watching Moses lead for 40 years. There had to be a myriad of "Red Sea" days where he had to think, "Now there's no way I could pull that off like he just did." At the same time I'm sure there were "Ticked Off So I Hit a Rock" days where he thought, "Now I'll be sure NOT to do that when it's my turn!" Our leaders teach us what's possible and because we're all human, they teach us what not to do as well. A wise man will study the leaders and rehearse what his decisions might've been in that leader's situation. One more thing ... if there's a leader that doesn't mind spending some time with you, beg questions of him like crazy and soak as much wisdom up as you can.

5. While You're Waiting Don't Forget to Enjoy Yourself & Try Different Things. I have to remind myself of this often. But don't forget to have a life! Don't forget to exhaust your energies on developing different skills and interests. Leaders get the opportunity to drill down into 1 or 2 areas that are essential if they are to lead well. Though someone in waiting should practice some of this, truth is you get to continue trying out different things, different pursuits, different styles, different whatever to continue figuring it out until it's your time. And guess what? THIS IS FUN! A waiting season doesn't have to be painful or boring. It's one of the few seasons in life you'll have to be all over the place and that be exactly what you should be doing! Enjoy!

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Memphis since 2009, leading the Downtown Outpost. He attended Mississippi College, earning a degree in Political Science and a place in the Hall of Fame. Passionate for the poor and marginalized, Ricky enjoys the thriving partnership his church has with the Memphis Union Mission and other worthy ministries.

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